

The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations

Nilanthi Samaranayake, Michael Connell, and Satu Limaye

February 2017





U.S. Navy photo caption: PACIFIC OCEAN (April 10, 2011) The aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and ships from the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group and the Indian navy transit the Pacific Ocean during exercise Malabar 2011, a bilateral training operation with the Indian navy. Ronald Reagan is operating in the western Pacific Ocean.

U.S. Navy photo caption: CHENNAI, India (Oct. 13, 2015) Officers from Indian navy, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, and U.S. Navy meet for an executive officer's call in the wardroom of the littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) as part of Exercise Malabar. Currently on a 16-month rotational deployment in support of the Indo-Asia-Pacific Rebalance, Fort Worth is a fast and agile warship tailor-made to patrol the region's littorals and work hull-to-hull with partner navies, providing the U.S. 7th Fleet with the flexible capabilities it needs now and in the future.

U.S. Pacific Command photo caption: CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii (Dec. 7, 2015) Commander of U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), Adm. Harry B. Harris Jr., right, and India Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, render honors during a welcome ceremony. During this first-ever visit by an India Defense Minister to the PACOM headquarters, Parrikar met with Harris to discuss partnerships and the maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific.

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Abstract

CNA conducted this study to determine how the United States can advance its naval and maritime relationship with India in the coming five to 10 years. U.S.-India defense relations, especially in the naval domain, have expanded in the past two decades and soared under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The study analyzes the key factors that have shaped the course of relations between the U.S. Navy (USN) and the Indian Navy and considers India's possible future trajectories and how they may impact bilateral naval ties. CNA concludes that key factors affecting the evolution of the USN-Indian Navy relationship are mostly beyond the control of the two navies themselves. Despite the wider diplomatic and geopolitical circumstances, there are many overlapping areas of ongoing interest between the two navies that favor closer ties. Finally, drawing on an accompanying project paper, this study suggests viewing the increasing importance of the region west of India as a promising area of bilateral naval security cooperation.

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Executive Summary

Washington's relations with New Delhi have soared to new heights. President Barack Obama¹ became the first U.S. president to visit India twice during an administration, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made four official visits to the United States. Their bonhomie impacted defense relations, driving them upward and setting the pace for this cooperation throughout their governments. Given Washington's rising equities and threat perceptions in the Indo-Pacific region, the Obama administration signaled the priority it attaches to the U.S. strategic relationship with India in various U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) documents.

Within this context, this CNA study determines how the United States can further advance its naval relationship with India in the coming five to 10 years, given the leading role of the U.S. Navy (USN) in advancing U.S. defense cooperation with India for roughly two decades. This work studies the key factors that have shaped the course of USN-Indian Navy relations to date and considers India's possible future trajectories, in order to reach judgments on how they may impact bilateral naval ties.

CNA finds that there are several factors that both limit and create possibilities for the USN-Indian Navy relationship. They can be sub-divided into strategic level and operational level. The strategic-level factors are: the role of China and Pakistan; ideology and Indian party politics; personalities; and black swans. The operational-level factors are: Indian bureaucracy and civil-military legacies; the U.S. defense foundational agreements;² diverging stances on military activities in exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and freedom of navigation operations; and general capacity constraints that impact the Indian Navy. This study concludes that, while these factors affect the evolution of the USN-Indian Navy relationship, they are mostly beyond the control of the navies themselves. This does not mean that they cannot engage each other during dips in the overall relationship; it means only that the two

¹ This 2016 study was conducted before the election of President Donald Trump.

² An accompanying CNA project paper provides a U.S. legal analysis of the three defense foundational agreements and assesses Indian concerns about signing them. Mark E. Rosen, JD, LL.M., and Douglas Jackson, *The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective*, CNA, 2017.

navies should continue to acknowledge the larger context in which they must be prepared to work.

Our study envisions four strategic trajectories that India may take in the next five to 10 years and draws implications for USN-Indian Navy cooperation. Elements of all four trajectories may certainly be present at any given time, but these archetypes are intended to depict the predominant themes of India's potential futures that may impact USN security cooperation with the Indian Navy. They are:

- Baseline trajectory: continuation of the current, incremental growth in India's economic and military capabilities
- Alternate trajectory 1: renewed focus on Pakistan and land-based threats
- Alternate trajectory 2: Monroe Doctrine in the Indian Ocean
- Alternate trajectory 3: increased tensions with China.

Despite the outcomes of these potential futures for overall U.S.-India relations, the USN and Indian Navy can work together effectively given their shared interests across multiple missions. Finally, this study draws on the findings of an accompanying project paper to highlight the increasing importance of India's "West"³—i.e., the western Indian Ocean region—as an area critical to India's national interests. This suggests possibilities for USN-Indian Navy cooperation that are outside the traditional U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR), but may advance the U.S. naval relationship with India.

We propose the following recommendations for Washington policymakers:

- Continue to build on progress in navy-to-navy ties in support of higher-level guidance. At present, we cannot yet know the extent to which Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter's successor will share his vision of the importance of the military dimension of the U.S.-India relationship.
- Reinforce successes in navy-to-navy relations by attempting to deepen existing engagement activities such as the MALABAR exercise, rather than adding new initiatives. Such an approach takes into account India's capacity to engage on defense matters. This recommendation comes with a caveat: If India proposes

³ An accompanying CNA project paper examines this subject in particular, as well as India's security activities in the Indo-Pacific. It includes a detailed examination of India's maritime diplomacy in this region, as well as the Indian Navy's missions and capabilities. See Satu Limaye, *Weighted West, Focused on the Indian Ocean and Cooperating across the Indo-Pacific: The Indian Navy's New Maritime Strategy, Capabilities, and Diplomacy*, CNA, 2017.

a new naval or maritime initiative, the United States should be poised to accommodate this request.

- If difficulties in the overall U.S.-India relationship arise in the future, focus activity on naval interactions that are not perceived as politically sensitive. Examples are common interests within maritime domain awareness (MDA), search and rescue (SAR), non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), coastal security lessons learned, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR).
- Ensure the two navies have seats at the table in the resurrected HA/DR working group to ensure that naval and maritime equities are addressed. Seeking to improve coordination on disaster response, this group has its origins in the July 2005 U.S.-India Disaster Relief Initiative (DRI) established after the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The U.S.-India Disaster Response Working Group had fallen dormant but was brought back to life as the HA/DR working group under the PACOM-Indian Integrated Defence Staff military cooperation group before Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar's visit to Hawaii in 2015.
- Work with India in the Indian Ocean, outside the PACOM AOR. U.S. military planners can create opportunities for the USN to work with the Indian Navy in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) AORs. India's primary area of interest (i.e., the Indian Ocean) is divided between three U.S. combatant commands (COCOMs). Areas of potential cooperation include NEO planning, counterpiracy exercises, and trilateral capacity-building of smaller navies and coast guards in the region.

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Glossary

AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
AOR	area of responsibility
AT&L	Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (U.S.)
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
COCOM	combatant command
DHS	Department of Homeland Security (U.S.)
DOD	Department of Defense (U.S.)
DTTI	Defense Technology and Trade Initiative
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FONOP	freedom of navigation operation
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
IMAC	Information Management and Analysis Centre
IN	Indian Navy
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
MDA	maritime domain awareness
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs (India)
mil-to-mil	military-to-military
MIO	maritime interdiction operations
MoD	Ministry of Defence (India)
MPR	maritime patrol and reconnaissance
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NEO	non-combatant evacuation operation
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PMO	Prime Minister's Office (India)
SLOC	sea lines of communication
UN	United Nations
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
USG	U.S. government
USN	U.S. Navy
UUV	unmanned underwater vehicle

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Introduction

Washington's relations with New Delhi have soared, particularly in the realm of defense cooperation.⁴ President Obama became the first U.S. president to visit India twice during an administration, and Prime Minister Modi paid four official visits to the United States. Both leaders had resoundingly successful visits, with tangible outcomes. These included the 2015 U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region and the 2016 signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)—the latter of which was sought by Washington for over a decade. Their bonhomie impacted defense relations, driving them upward and setting the pace for this cooperation throughout their governments. Their June 2016 summit concluded with the U.S. recognition of India as a “Major Defense Partner.”⁵

Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter met with Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar more than any other counterpart—an unprecedented seven times in total. Both officials' trips included visits to each other's operational commands (Eastern Naval Command and Pacific Command, respectively) for the first time ever. Of the military services, navy-to-navy ties have benefited the most from this senior-level direction. In fact, USN relations with the Indian Navy have served as a driving force behind improved defense relations and interactions for roughly two decades. In recent years, this momentum has been aided by a convergence of the strategic goals that the two countries have in maritime Asia. New Delhi has become increasingly concerned by Chinese operations in the Indian Ocean—especially undersea deployments—while the United States continues to encounter diplomatic and military challenges from the rise of China throughout the Indo-Pacific region. A notable outcome of this convergence under the Modi administration was the trilateral MALABAR exercise in the Bay of Bengal in 2015. India had been reluctant to conduct a multilateral

⁴ This analysis is one of three reports for a CNA study of U.S.-India naval and defense cooperation. For the other reports, see Satu Limaye, *Weighted West, Focused on the Indian Ocean and Cooperating across the Indo-Pacific: The Indian Navy's New Maritime Strategy, Capabilities, and Diplomacy*, CNA, 2017; and Mark E. Rosen, JD, LL.M., and Douglas Jackson, *The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective*, CNA, 2017.

⁵ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Joint Statement: The United States and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century,” Jun. 7, 2016.

MALABAR in this location due to China's protest after the 2007 exercise with the United States, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. Yet, the MALABAR exercise included Japan in the Bay of Bengal only a year after Modi entered office.

The Obama administration signaled the priority it attaches to the U.S. strategic relationship with India in various U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) documents. With the announcement of the U.S. Rebalance to Asia, the Defense Strategic Guidance in 2012 asserted the importance of the Indian Ocean and South Asia to the United States and prominently identified India as a strategic partner:

The United States is also investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region.⁶

In 2014, DOD elaborated on its “strategic partnership” with India in the *Quadrennial Defense Review*.⁷ The following year, DOD’s *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* went into detail about Washington’s commitment to working with India in the region.⁸ Furthermore, the 2015 tri-service U.S. Navy-U.S. Marine Corps-U.S. Coast Guard strategy document, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, affirms the importance of the Indian Ocean and the U.S. pursuit of partnership with India.⁹

In fact, some strategic and defense goals that U.S. government (USG) policymakers long pursued have materialized under the Modi administration. For example, since 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had been encouraging India not only

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Jan. 5, 2012, 2, http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf.

⁷ “The United States supports India’s rise as an increasingly capable actor in the region, and we are deepening our strategic partnership, including through the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative.” DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, Mar. 4, 2014, 4, 17, http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf.

⁸ DOD, *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy*, Aug. 21, 2015, 28-29, http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/NDAA%20A-P_Maritime_Security_Strategy-08142015-1300-FINALFORMAT.PDF.

⁹ “America’s economy and security are inextricably linked to the immense volume of trade that flows across the Indian and Pacific Oceans... Based on shared strategic interests, the United States seeks to strengthen cooperation with long-standing allies in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand—and continues to cultivate partnerships with states such as Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Vietnam.” U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, Mar. 2015, 3, <http://www.navy.mil/local/maritime/150227-CS21R-Final.pdf>.

to “Look East” but to “Act East.” In 2014, India formally renamed its “Look East” policy “Act East.” Also, as mentioned earlier, during Prime Minister Modi’s June 2016 summit with President Obama in Washington, the two leaders finalized the text of the LEMOA—formerly known as the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) and Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Secretary Carter and Minister Parrikar signed the LEMOA two months later. Moreover, also in June 2016, New Delhi announced Japan’s inclusion as a permanent member of MALABAR, which Indian policymakers had previously insisted was its bilateral naval exercise with the United States.

Despite these long-sought gains and successes, Washington may need to continue to wait for other desired outcomes—including some that may never materialize. While a core group of U.S. policymakers have developed a nuanced understanding of working within New Delhi’s political, bureaucratic, and ideational norms, some newcomers to India policy in parts of the USG may impose unrealistic expectations, such as believing that the Indian Navy will be a USN partner in East Asia against China. Nevertheless, Washington will continue to work within the confines imposed by New Delhi, while encouraging it on forward movement that will sometimes come to fruition.

Given these trends, CNA studied the prospects for the two countries to advance navy-to-navy ties in the context of considerable momentum in the larger bilateral relationship. This 2016 project builds on previous CNA studies on India and the Indian Ocean.¹⁰ Since then, observers have witnessed the end to a decade of Congress Party rule—and its non-aligned foreign policy tradition—as well as the new era of Indian foreign policy under Modi. The implications of these changes for U.S.-India strategic relations and potential for the two navies to work together in the Indo-Pacific warrant renewed evaluation.

¹⁰ Nilanthi Samaranayake, Catherine Lea, and Dmitry Gorenburg, *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean*, CNA, Jul. 2014, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2013-U-004941-Final2.pdf; Nilanthi Samaranayake, Satu Limaye, Dmitry Gorenburg, Catherine Lea, and Thomas A. Bowditch, *U.S.-India Security Burden-Sharing? The Potential for Coordinated Capacity-Building in the Indian Ocean*, CNA, Apr. 2013, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2012-U-001121-Final2.pdf. For wider Indian Ocean analysis, see CNA’s Long Littoral report series from 2012 on the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal: <https://www.cna.org/research/long-littoral>.

Research questions

To understand the possibilities for advancing U.S.-India naval ties, we needed to answer the following questions:

- How has the USN-Indian Navy relationship evolved?
- How are India's security activities in the Indo-Pacific changing?
- What are the strategic trajectories that India could take in the coming decade?

Analytical approach

To answer these questions, we followed four discrete steps. For the first step, we examined New Delhi's bilateral and multilateral outreach in the Indo-Pacific in order to identify patterns in the country's regional maritime relations. We also studied the Indian Navy's new maritime strategy and strategic literature in order to understand its missions as well as its capabilities.

In the second step, we sought to understand the evolution of the navy-to-navy relationship thus far. To do this, we identified the key factors that have contributed to these ties and how they have facilitated or hindered relations. We examined key factors such as change in prime minister, party leadership, and India's bureaucratic structure. To gain a deeper understanding of the arc of bilateral naval relations, we spoke with leading Indian strategic thinkers and officials to seek their insights for this research. In particular, we would like to thank analysts at CNA's maritime partner organization in India, the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), for kindly providing their perspectives.

In addition to field research, we conducted a facilitated roundtable at CNA to canvass the opinions of subject matter experts on India regarding potential changes to India's security environment. This closed, not-for-attribution roundtable with experts from the think-tank and academic communities allowed us to gain insights into what the future of military-to-military (mil-to-mil) ties between the two countries could look like. A CNA analyst moderated the discussion, asking a series of questions that were intended to elicit the opinions of the participants on the future of U.S.-India relations, mil-to-mil cooperation under current and future U.S. and Indian administrations, geopolitical and regional considerations, and New Delhi's changing strategic calculus in reaction to a variety of current and future hypothetical events. The purpose of the discussion was to assess the various factors that could impact

the trajectory and pace of maritime engagement with India. Based on the input from this roundtable and our field research, we refined our factor analysis.

For our third step, we devised possible strategic trajectories that India could take. To do this, we drew on the insights gained from our field research and roundtable concerning the various factors that could impact the future of India's armed forces (including the Indian Navy) and created four scenarios that could emerge. From this analysis, we developed four possible trajectories for India in the coming five to 10 years. The trajectories are strategic, rather than specific to the Indian Navy. We first developed a baseline, current trajectory for India as it continues to expand its economic and military capabilities under the Modi administration, and then three alternative trajectories that deviate from the baseline. After we had developed the baseline and alternative trajectories, we analyzed the viability of the scenarios associated with the trajectories and the impact that they would likely have on navy-to-navy ties. For each strategic trajectory, we explored what the Indian Navy would look like, how it would be structured, and what its primary missions and functions would be. Then, we assessed the implications for navy-to-navy ties.

Finally, we considered the areas where U.S. and Indian naval and maritime interests could converge and derived recommendations for Washington policymakers to pursue in these fruitful areas for engagement. Throughout these steps, we sought to corroborate our information with external data sources where possible. Data sources included published DOD strategy documents and Indian maritime strategy and doctrine; meetings with key U.S. and Indian officials, retired military officers, and experts in New Delhi and Washington; public and private think tank meetings; and previous CNA studies.

Organization of report

To understand how the United States and India can advance their naval ties for the future, this report will begin by analyzing the factors that have affected the shape of the USN-Indian Navy relationship in recent years. Having considered these factors, the next chapter will adopt a future-oriented outlook by envisioning the possible trajectories that India may take in the next decade. Within each trajectory, we will examine the implications for USN-Indian Navy ties. Finally, we will present conclusions and recommendations derived from our analysis. Our recommendations suggest that Washington policymakers pursue multiple areas of security cooperation in an effort to advance navy-to-navy ties, regardless of the possible strategic trajectories that New Delhi may take in the coming years.

Factors Affecting the Evolution of U.S.-India Naval Ties

To address our first research question, about the shape of the USN-Indian Navy relationship, the study team chose to examine the key factors that have contributed to the evolution of this relationship. In general, U.S.-Indian mil-to-mil cooperation is trending positively under the Modi administration, with concrete benefits for navy-to-navy relations. The two countries are reaching new heights in their mil-to-mil relationship, especially in the naval realm. This is evident from the expansion of the MALABAR exercise in terms of members and location; the recent high-level visits and exchanges; India's growing desire to acquire U.S. military technology and platforms, such as the purchase of P-8 maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft and the Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation; and New Delhi's signing of the LEMOA, the Information Exchange Annex (IEA), and a white shipping information agreement.¹¹

However, progress is by no means assured, and warrants an understanding of the underlying factors that have helped or hindered defense ties, including the navy-to-navy relationship. Changes of leadership in Washington or New Delhi, domestic political factors, the actions of Pakistan and China, or even so-called "black swan" events (e.g., terrorist attacks, diplomatic spats, and port visit incidents) could affect mil-to-mil ties in either positive or negative ways. In this chapter, we examine the factors in both New Delhi and Washington that have affected navy-to-navy relations and could facilitate or hinder these ties in the future. They are divided into two groups: strategic-level factors; and operational-level factors, which are more consequential to the navy-to-navy relationship. Here is a summary:

¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, "U.S.-India Joint Statement on the visit of Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar to the United States," Release No. NR-306-16, Aug. 29, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/929270/us-india-joint-statement-on-the-visit-of-minister-of-defence-manohar-parrikar-t>.

- Strategic level
 - Role of China and Pakistan
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 - Black swans
- Operational level
 - Bureaucracy and civil-military legacies
 - Foundational agreements
 - FONOPs and military activities in EEZs
 - Capacity constraints affecting the Indian Navy

Strategic-level factors

Strategic-level factors are wider than issues in the naval realm, and even wider than issues relating to defense. In fact, they shape the foreign and domestic policies of countries in general. The factors below have often affected navy-to-navy relations between India and the United States.

Role of China and Pakistan

A decisive factor affecting both the trajectory and the pace of military engagement between New Delhi and Washington—and one over which neither country is likely to have much control—is the role played by China and Pakistan. India's changing threat perceptions regarding these countries are likely to drive how it approaches security cooperation initiatives with the United States and U.S. allies, such as Japan and Australia. Since independence, Pakistan continues to be seen by India's leadership to pose a significant immediate threat, particularly due to the activities of militant Islamist groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba. However, long-standing territorial disputes with China, perceived support by Beijing of leftist militant groups in India, and the PLA's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean have gradually altered New Delhi's strategic calculus, with China now perceived as a long-term challenge, if not an outright threat, to India's security. To the extent that China continues to be perceived as a threat by India's leadership, it is likely to drive New Delhi to cooperate more closely with Washington. Still, there are plausible scenarios involving China and Pakistan that could alter India's strategic calculus in this regard. These include: if the United States were to reinvigorate its mil-to-mil relationship with Pakistan; if China or Pakistan (as well as a nexus of Chinese-Pakistani interests) were to pose a more immediate threat to India's security than they currently do; or, less likely, if the United States or India were to reach some sort of accommodation with China.

Washington's policies toward Pakistan and China

New Delhi often expresses concerns regarding Washington's policies toward Beijing and Islamabad. U.S. policies toward these countries sometimes inadvertently impede its efforts toward India. In light of the asymmetric challenge India faces from Pakistan as well as the latter's pursuit of submarines from China, Washington's Pakistan policies can sometimes appear to be a finger in the eye to Indians regarding New Delhi's strategic interests. The announcement of the U.S. sale of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan was raised by Indian strategists as an indication that Washington is not reciprocating in the spirit of the Modi administration's positive moves to partner with the United States.¹² Moreover, the bureaucratic structure of USG responsibility for policy on Pakistan in DOD and the State Department does not necessarily promote coordination with policymakers in charge of India policy,¹³ leaving New Delhi policymakers and experts trying to navigate conflicting signals from Washington. Unfortunately, navy-to-navy relations are often at the mercy of this disconnect.¹⁴

Regarding China, Indian policymakers and strategists were alarmed at the beginning of the Obama administration when the two sides appeared to discuss a "G-2" construct where the United States and China would dictate matters in Asia. Specifically, they pointed to the joint statement that asserted a Chinese role in South Asia, where India sees itself as the regional leader:

The two sides welcomed all efforts conducive to peace, stability and development in South Asia. They support the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight terrorism, maintain domestic stability and achieve sustainable economic and social development, and support the improvement and growth of relations between India and Pakistan. The two sides are ready to strengthen communication, dialogue and cooperation on issues related to South Asia and work together to promote peace, stability and development in that region.¹⁵

¹² CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

¹³ Bruce Riedel and Stephen Cohen, "Rethinking South Asia," *The National Interest*, May 4, 2011.

¹⁴ A prominent example from 2016 was during the Raisina Dialogue, in which Admiral Harry Harris of PACOM spoke about working more with India in the maritime realm, including "in the not too distant future, American and Indian Navy vessels steaming together." Yet, many experts found this message incongruent with the news at the time about Washington's F-16 fighter jet deal with Pakistan. CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

¹⁵ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "U.S.-China Joint Statement," Nov. 17, 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>.

Since 2009, U.S. strategic relations with China have taken a dramatic turn downward. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping in particular, Beijing has assumed a more assertive foreign policy—especially in the South China Sea—and it is at odds with Washington’s prerogatives. By contrast, U.S. relations with India have surged forward, especially since Prime Minister Modi entered office in 2014. This trend does not appear likely to shift, given the foreign policy directions of Xi and Modi. Nevertheless, Indian experts continue to refer to the potential for a G-2 proposition to return,¹⁶ possibly due to a potential “black swan” deterioration in bilateral relations.

Ideology and party politics

Since India achieved independence in 1947, the principle of strategic autonomy—that is, avoiding bilateral alliances with extra-regional powers—has been a key element of New Delhi’s foreign policy. Since then, it has continued to govern the parameters of mil-to-mil cooperation between New Delhi and other powers, including the United States. While, as a principle, it cannot be ignored, the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and service-level officials in India have often found practical ways of fostering bilateral military ties with their U.S.-military counterparts absent a formal alliance structure. The current approach can be easily contrasted with India’s policies during the Cold War, which were firmly rooted in the principles of non-alignment and neutrality (albeit friendship with the Soviet Union). Since the end of the Cold War, New Delhi has evolved its foreign policy conceptually from neutrality to de facto partnering, with impacts in the maritime sphere.¹⁷

The Congress Party has dominated much of India’s existence as a republic since 1947 and has been the party ideologically associated with “non-alignment.” As a result, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not as closely identified with this concept. During brief periods of leadership by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), New Delhi notably became more amenable to defense cooperation with Washington. For example, following the September 11, 2001, attacks, New Delhi (under Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s NDA administration) permitted the Indian Navy to conduct high-value shipping escorts of twenty-four U.S.-flagged vessels through the Strait of Malacca

¹⁶ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

¹⁷ As explained by one Indian scholar, “India’s civilizational roots and the consequent evolution of its statecraft always precluded alliance relationships. Hence, New Delhi needed to fend for itself to preserve these vital interests. Nonetheless, India’s multi-vectored foreign policy began to yield dividends in the forms of strategic convergence with most stakeholders in India’s maritime neighbourhood.” Gurpreet S. Khurana, “Indian Maritime Doctrine and Asian Security: Intentions and Capabilities,” in Namrata Goswami, ed., *India’s Approach to Asia: Strategy, Geopolitics and Responsibility*. New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses, 2016, 274.

into the Bay of Bengal during 2002.¹⁸ Furthermore, the BJP-led NDA administration under Modi has taken the USN-Indian Navy relationship to its greatest heights.

Certainly, significant factors include the potential for changes in party leadership and whether the BJP under Prime Minister Modi can maintain an electoral majority in the 2019 general elections. Moreover, even the BJP has a firm “strategic autonomy” wing, which, depending on the domestic political situation in India, could limit the extent of mil-to-mil ties with the United States. Whether the current trend holds in the next decade is open to question.

Personalities

Narendra Modi illustrates the importance of human agency in conducting foreign affairs. Compared to mild-mannered Manmohan Singh of the Congress Party, a career bureaucrat who was 81 years old when he left office in 2014, Modi—a fiery opposition candidate who was 63 years old upon entering office—has exuded striking energy in his dealings with international counterparts. Of note, he appears to be less risk averse than his predecessor in making policy decisions.

Certainly, the personality of the prime minister is a factor that cannot be entirely divorced from the political realities he or she faces. For example, during his first administration, Singh was much more forward leaning in India’s ties with the United States, having put his leadership on the line to conclude the civil nuclear deal with Washington. Yet, Singh was not able to remain as close to Washington in his second term, given political calculations and the need to placate coalition partners. In particular, bilateral relations were at a low when Singh departed office, especially with the December 2013 Devyani Khobragade incident¹⁹ adding salt to the wounds in bilateral relations. Another major personality that affected bilateral defense relations was the previous minister of defence (under the Singh administration), A. K. Antony, who was seen by many U.S. officials as a major impediment to closer bilateral defense ties.

In addition to India, key personalities in the United States have also played a critical role in fostering or slowing the pace of relations between the two countries, particularly at the mil-to-mil level. Before the Obama administration’s push regarding India policy beginning in the 2011-2012 timeframe, New Delhi believed the George W. Bush administration was keen to advance bilateral relations as seen by the civil

¹⁸ This high-value cargo was meant for sustaining operations in Afghanistan, and, at the time, the Malacca Strait was known for having many incidents of piracy.

¹⁹ Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade’s manner of arrest in New York by U.S. law enforcement officers was vigorously protested by New Delhi.

nuclear agreement. In contrast, many believed India's ties were not as highly prioritized under the new Obama administration in 2009. New Delhi saw renewed attention only after U.S. relations with China started to diminish.

Regardless of the early tone of his India policy, President Obama became the first U.S. president to visit India twice during an administration, which observers took as a clear indication of the importance that Washington places on its strategic relationship with New Delhi. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter was another notable example, because his commitment to advancing the defense relationship with India was evident beforehand during his tenure as under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics (AT&L) and as deputy secretary of defense. The success of the U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) was due largely to his personal efforts.

The next round of general elections in India are planned for 2019, and the Modi administration may find its political fortunes challenged in its second term, as Singh found. Such setbacks have the potential to affect ties with the United States, including in the defense and naval realms. In terms of personalities, Modi is often viewed as being fundamentally disposed to be a transformational leader, whereas Singh was by nature a bureaucrat.²⁰ Modi sees the need for two terms in order to achieve his vision for India domestically and in terms of its foreign policy.

Black swans

"Black swans" are events that occur to people's great surprise and usually with detrimental effect. Absent a formal alliance structure, random black swan events could negatively impact the trajectory of mil-to-mil ties between Washington and New Delhi, including navy-to-navy relations. This would especially be the case if such an event called into question U.S. reliability as a security partner. Washington's stance on security issues involving Pakistan and terrorism emanating from Pakistan will receive scrutiny by the Indian government and public. For instance, if another major terrorist attack took place on Indian soil, similar to the Lashkar-e-Taiba attacks in Mumbai in 2008, New Delhi would be sensitive to any perception that Washington did not fully embrace India's position and side with New Delhi against Islamabad. Even relatively minor incidents, such as the Devyani Khobragade incident in 2013, could temporarily derail mil-to-mil relations.

Likewise, a black swan event could either lead to the Indian Navy losing resources to the other services or cause it to posture its forces in a manner that would be less conducive to engagement with the USN. An example of the latter occurred in 2008,

²⁰ CNA discussions, Washington, D.C., 2016.

following the Mumbai terrorist attacks, when the Indian Navy was compelled to shift some of its planning and acquisition efforts away from blue-water operations to support coastal and offshore security operations.²¹

Operational-level factors

The following factors are more directly consequential to navy-to-navy ties than the strategic-level factors examined above. They have a direct bearing on the defense policies of India and the United States, with special relevance to naval relations.

Bureaucracy and civil-military legacies

For years, India's bureaucracy was often viewed by U.S. policymakers as having obstructed forward movement on U.S. defense and naval ties with Indian counterparts. For its part, the U.S. bureaucracy is certainly not immune to criticism. Yet, under Congress Party leadership, which has dominated much of India's existence as a republic, the bureaucracy had political support for this approach. Essentially, civilians, especially in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), have historically reined in the military services in terms of the latter's freedom of action. Given the experience of difficult civil-military relations in neighboring Pakistan, Indian officials sought to minimize the chances that India could follow a similar path.²² Furthermore, the number of diplomats in MEA has been insufficient for a country of India's size—Singapore has nearly the same number of diplomats.²³ This lacking capacity has not helped a bureaucracy that is overwhelmed by demands for greater interactions with bilateral partners and in multilateral venues.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence

²¹ Khurana, 2016, 283. According to Khurana, "Although the IN [Indian Navy] is progressively enhancing its 'blue-water' capabilities, the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008 was a major setback, which compelled the IN to shift its emphasis to coastal and offshore security. Following the attack, the IN was compelled to revise its force-level plans. The earlier planned ratio of longlegged platforms versus littoral/policing vessels was thus altered from 60:40 (1.5) to 40:60 (0.67)."

²² Steven I. Wilkinson, *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

²³ Daniel Markey, "Developing India's Foreign Policy 'Software,'" *Asia Policy* 8, The National Bureau of Asian Research, Jul. 2009; Tridivesh Singh Maini, "For Smart Diplomacy, Reshape Our Dull Foreign Service Mandarins," *Global Asia Forum*, Jul. 21, 2015, https://www.globalasia.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=forum&wr_id=8556&sca=Global+Asia+Forum&page=2.

²⁴ Atul Mishra and Jason Miklian, "The Evolving Domestic Drivers of Indian Foreign Policy," *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre*, Jan. 2016, 6,

(MoD) establishment has not developed an informed coherent outlook, given non-specialist civilians dominating the bureaucracy and no chairman of the joint chiefs of staff-equivalent defense chief to present a unified, joint voice from the services.²⁵

Upon the Modi administration's entry to power, however, the dynamic of bureaucratic obstructions seen by U.S. policymakers to defense ties became less of an obstacle than seen under the previous, Congress Party-led, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule. Modi eventually transferred India's ambassador to the United States, Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to be foreign secretary, the senior-most career diplomat at the MEA. Moreover, the MEA and the Indian Navy appear increasingly aligned in terms of vision and goals for India's outreach in the Indo-Pacific region. On the U.S. side, the creation of the India Rapid Reaction Cell within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for AT&L has helped to expedite defense matters under DTTI.

U.S.-India naval ties under the Modi administration are strong and continue to thrive; however, to institutionalize efficiencies in the relationship, India may need to cycle through positive bilateral relations for many years and generational replacement of MEA diplomats and Ministry of Defence (MoD) civil servants who were once averse to close defense cooperation with the United States.

On Washington's side of the equation, administration priorities and senior-level guidance will continue to determine the pace of defense outreach to New Delhi. Certainly, the USN will abide by this guidance. High-level intervention appears to incentivize the USG to pursue such outreach with counterparts.

Foundational agreements²⁶

For more than a decade, Washington has sought for New Delhi to sign three defense "foundational agreements."²⁷ For the United States, the legal requirement to conclude these agreements is its own impediment to advancing defense ties. Nevertheless,

http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/f9f6e4b3e8a2c703364e7fb102dbf413.pdf.

²⁵ Frank O'Donnell, "Indian Defense Reforms: Institutionalizing Clarity and Cohesion in Security Planning," *India in Transition*, Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) of the University of Pennsylvania, Nov. 16, 2015.

²⁶ See an accompanying CNA project paper that examines the three foundational agreements from a U.S. legal perspective and assesses Indian concerns about signing them. Rosen and Jackson, *Foundational Agreements in Perspective*.

²⁷ In April 2016, the agreements were renamed the "facilitating agreements" for discussion between DOD policymakers and Indian counterparts.

finalizing them would enhance interoperability with India and open more avenues for engagement. India signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the End-Use Monitoring Agreement (EUMA) in 2009, but for years has been averse to signing these three agreements due to its commitment to the principle of strategic autonomy. Indian views are largely centered on fears that these agreements would entangle India in military conflicts pursued by the United States. Others argue that India does not need to sign these agreements due to the work-arounds that have been made possible by the USG. For example, the fuel exchange agreement is a work-around in part to the named Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), so that Indian Navy and USN ships can refuel during counterpiracy operations in the western Indian Ocean. This agreement was renewed during Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar's visit to Hawaii in December 2015.

As an indication of how much progress has taken place in defense ties under the Modi administration, Parrikar signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in August 2016. This is a revised name for the previously named LSA, itself the renamed Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Nevertheless, at the mil-to-mil level, the degree to which progress can be made on resolving divergence over the remaining Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA), which has been renamed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geospatial Intelligence will affect the pace of defense engagement.

Absent the agreements, the Indian and U.S. navies are likely to continue to rely on work-arounds, which are helpful in the short term, but hinder interoperability in terms of sharing technology and intelligence. For example, the lack of consensus on signing the CISMOA impedes progress on navy-to-navy ties such as exchange of classified information. However, Indian policymakers do not yet appear convinced of the need to sign the CISMOA or BECA. Furthermore, Indian naval experts assert that the absence of these accords does not inhibit operational cooperation between the two navies.²⁸ Yet, signing the agreements would help intensify defense interactions, with benefits in the naval realm where the Indian Navy would get more access to the full capabilities of equipment also used by the U.S. military. Moreover, having agreements such as these completed may have been of value to India when, for example, Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar requested satellite information from the United States to help locate an Indian Air Force transport plane which went missing over the Bay of Bengal in July 2016.

²⁸ CNA discussions, New Delhi and Washington, D.C., 2016.

The signing of the LEMOA foundational agreement certainly represents historic progress for mil-to-mil and navy-to-navy ties. Ultimately, however, policymakers in India control the pace of this interaction since Washington generally wishes to proceed faster on defense cooperation than counterparts in New Delhi.

FONOPs and military activities in EEZs

Both New Delhi and Washington's interests in freedom of navigation are convergent—but only to a point. In January 2015, both President Obama and Prime Minister Modi signed the “U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region,” which states:

We affirm the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea.²⁹

On its own, India has affirmed this principle through its minister of defence's speech at the 2016 Shangri La Dialogue.

While supportive of this principle in the South China Sea, New Delhi is not likely to test it through freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) such as those that the USN has conducted in the South China Sea. For example, at the March 2016 Raisina Dialogue gathering of Indian officials and experts, Admiral Harry Harris discussed a vision for both navies after speaking of the importance of USN FONOPs:

I echo Ambassador Verma's vision that, in the not too distant future, American and Indian Navy vessels steaming together will become a common and welcome sight throughout Indo-Asia-Pacific waters, as we work together to maintain freedom of the seas for all nations.³⁰

After his speech, Indian experts resoundingly expressed disapproval of the implication that India would join the United States in joint patrols or FONOPs, especially in the South China Sea—a region that was referenced in the next paragraph.³¹ Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar even ruled out this possibility in

²⁹ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region,” Jan. 25, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/25/us-india-joint-strategic-vision-asia-pacific-and-indian-ocean-region>.

³⁰ Admiral Harry B. Harris, Jr., U.S. Pacific Command, “Raisina Dialogue Remarks: Let's Be Ambitious Together,” U.S. Embassy New Delhi, India, Mar. 2, 2016, <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/683842/raisina-dialogue-remarks-lets-be-ambitious-together>.

³¹ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

subsequent media reporting.³² Indian policymakers and experts generally see FONOPs as operations that could make sense between the United States and its treaty allies, such as Japan, but not with non-allies such as India. These operations are believed to antagonize China unnecessarily and are not in India's interests for several reasons.

First, the Indian Navy defines its primary area of interest as being the Indian Ocean, with the Pacific (including South China Sea) as secondary.³³ Given this secondary focus on the South China Sea, New Delhi is reluctant to antagonize China on this issue. C. Raja Mohan even observes that despite the Modi administration's tougher talk on the South China Sea, his government has not even concluded a deal on exporting arms such as the Brahmos missile to South China Sea stakeholders.³⁴

A second reason that India does not see such operations to be in its national interests is the strong belief that Beijing would never impede the flow of trade in the South China Sea. Experts state that the United States is merely worried about the passage of U.S. military ships rather than commercial shipping, which is India's primary concern.³⁵ Through its Act East policy, formerly known as Look East, India is seeking to integrate its economy with those in East Asia, especially Southeast Asia.

A third factor undergirds India's aversion to participating in U.S. FONOPs: India's interpretation of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding military activities in exclusive economic zones (EEZ) is different from that of the United States. In fact, India's position aligns more closely with China's position. According to the Freedom of Navigation (FON) report, DOD determined that India makes "excessive maritime claims" by requiring "prior consent" for "military exercises or maneuvers in the EEZ."³⁶ In 2001, New Delhi even protested USNS *Bowditch* conducting survey operations in India's EEZ. Furthermore, Indian naval

³² "As of now, India has never taken part in any joint patrol; we only do joint exercises. The question of joint patrol does not arise." See Manohar Parrikar in Sushant Singh and Pranav Kulkarni, "Question of Joint Patrolling with the U.S. Does Not Arise, Need to Cut the Flab from the Military: Parrikar," *Indian Express*, Mar. 5, 2016.

³³ Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Oct. 2015, 31-35, http://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf.

³⁴ C. Raja Mohan, "Raja-Mandala: Why Delhi Must Not Be at Sea," *Indian Express*, Nov. 3, 2015.

³⁵ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

³⁶ "India: Prior consent required for military exercises or maneuvers in the EEZ," U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), *Freedom of Navigation (FON) Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015*, Apr. 19, 2016, http://policy.defense.gov/Portals/11/Documents/gsa/cwmd/FON_Report_FY15.pdf.

strategists fear negative repercussions of U.S. FONOPs, such as People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Island chain.³⁷

Essentially, India is not convinced of the utility of FONOPs or joint patrols with the United States when China would likely be upset; when it does not see a threat from China to commercial traffic; and especially when the Indian Navy operates out of area in the South China Sea and could see PLA Navy activity near India's Andaman and Nicobar Command.

Capacity constraints affecting the Indian Navy

India is a growing power with an expanding economy and defense budget, but it does not yet have the capacity to translate its ambitions into reality.³⁸ A point highlighting the discrepancy between India's aspirations and its capacity surrounds the release of India's budget to parliament in February 2016. Many Indian experts were dissatisfied by the government's inattention to defense in the budget, despite Modi's words and actions over the last year emphasizing the role of the military, particularly the Indian Navy.³⁹

In terms of resources and funding, the Indian Navy has accounted for approximately 15 percent of the defense budget for the last five years and is moving slowly toward 20 percent, a level of funding that would be consistent with its stated goals and objectives. Because the navy is the smallest service in terms of personnel,⁴⁰ it is able to spend the most on research and development (R&D) and procurement, which means that in certain respects, ironically, it is able to project influence disproportionate to its size. Nevertheless, the Indian Navy—numbering only around 60,000 people—is facing a recruitment shortage.⁴¹ The relatively small size of the Indian Navy—particularly in terms of personnel—effectively limits the capacity to

³⁷ Abhijit Singh, "India's Strategic Stakes in the South China Sea," *Asia Policy* 21, The National Bureau of Asian Research, Jan. 2016, 19-20, <http://nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=860>.

³⁸ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India's Unrealized Power," in *Strategic Asia 2015-16: Foundations of National Power in the Asia-Pacific*, Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, eds., Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, Nov. 2015.

³⁹ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016. Sushant Singh, "Defence Budget Raises Serious Questions about India's National Security Plans," *Indian Express*, Mar. 1, 2016.

⁴⁰ According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Indian Navy has 58,350 active-duty personnel (including marines and naval aviation personnel). By way of comparison, the Air Force has 127,200 personnel, while the Army, long regarded as the dominant service in India, has a whopping 1,129,100 personnel on active duty. See IISS, *The Military Balance*, "Chapter Six: Asia," 2014, 241-244.

⁴¹ CNA discussion, Washington, D.C., 2015.

which it can engage with its U.S. and other foreign counterparts. While the Indian Navy continues to have advocates within the PMO and MEA, it faces considerable capacity challenges in the context of larger national priorities.

With the rise of the indigenous defense industry in India and the Indian Navy now committed to following the government's "Make in India" policy, Indian shipyards are not building platforms quickly enough. They are fully occupied with orders for the Indian Navy, as well as orders from Indian Ocean neighbors such as Sri Lanka and Mauritius. In fact, Indian Navy ships are being decommissioned faster than they are being replaced. In addition to shortfalls in capacity for new ships, the Indian Navy has suffered a spate of mishaps in the fleet, most prominently surrounding its submarines. (Moreover in March 2016, a sailor died in the boiler room on INS *Viraat*, India's aircraft carrier that will soon be decommissioned.)

As seen above, there are many strategic-level and operational-level factors that have directly and indirectly affected naval relations between India and the United States. The next chapter will take these factors into account as it explores the possible future trajectories that India may take. After positing these trajectories, the chapter will examine their implications for naval cooperation between India and the United States.

India's Possible Strategic Trajectories and Implications for the U.S.-India Naval Relationship

This chapter draws on the preceding research and analysis, including inputs from participants in our facilitated roundtable,⁴² to create possible trajectories that will impact naval relations between the United States and India. We first developed a baseline trajectory for India, assuming that it continues to expand its economic and military capabilities under the Modi administration. We then developed three alternative trajectories that deviate from the baseline.⁴³

In developing the alternative trajectories,⁴⁴ we bounded our analysis in four ways. First, the scenarios on which they were based had to be plausible. We purposely avoided using highly improbable scenarios, as these would have little utility for U.S. policymakers and naval officers. Second, we bounded our analysis in terms of time, based on the assumption that any analysis of alternative futures beyond five to 10 years would be extremely speculative. Third, in order to avoid duplication and maximize the resources at our disposal, the alternative trajectories that we developed had to deviate significantly from the baseline trajectory. Finally, they had to incorporate one or more of the factors that we had previously identified as having a significant impact on mil-to-mil cooperation, especially naval and maritime relations. Thus, the impact of the scenario had to extend beyond strategic political-military ties to affect security cooperation at a granular level.

The trajectories listed are meant to be archetypes, rather than predictions. In reality, the implications (for the Indian Navy's strategy, force structure, etc.) are likely to be

⁴² We are grateful to roundtable participants from think tanks and academia who took the time to contribute their thoughts to this research.

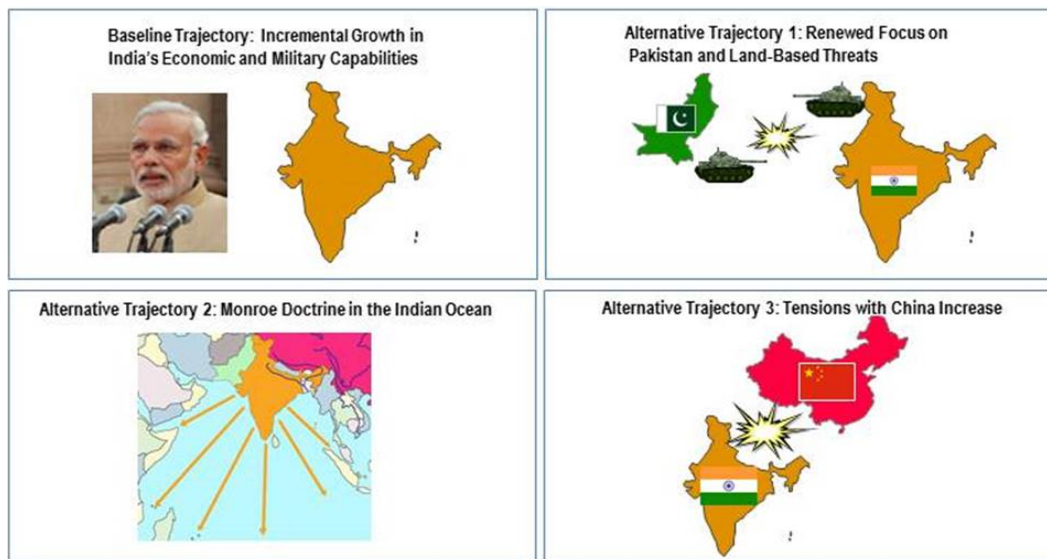
⁴³ A detailed discussion of our study methodology can be found in the "Analytical Approach" section of this report.

⁴⁴ We found the following research useful during this process: Iskander Rehman, "India's Aspirational Naval Doctrine," in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, Harsh V. Pant, ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 68-78.

influenced by a mix of two or three of the trajectories, but the categories listed should cover the gamut of possibilities.

We depict a summary of the four trajectories in Figure 1. Following that, we discuss the trajectories in detail and then examine their implications for bilateral naval security cooperation.

Figure 1. India's possible strategic trajectories



Source: Figure drawn by Mike Markowitz, CNA, 2016, except the following image:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Narendra_Modi#/media/File:Narendra_Modi_taking_oath.jpg

The baseline trajectory: incremental growth in India's economic and military capabilities

The baseline trajectory was designed to serve as a template against which we could analyze the impact of the three alternative scenarios listed below. It reflects the current state of India's growing economic and military capabilities projected five to 10 years into the future. It assumes that Modi wins a second term, meaning that his administration lasts 10 years, into 2024, despite some political setbacks. This trajectory features a gradual upward trend in India's regional and global outreach, particularly in the maritime realm.

The scenario

China's increasing assertiveness and a growing PLA Navy presence in the Indian Ocean prompt India to focus more on its eastern and southern periphery. The Indian Navy's share of the defense budget increases modestly to around 20 percent. Pakistan remains a source of concern, but Islamabad is increasingly preoccupied with internal stability issues. Mil-to-mil ties with the United States grow gradually, but are somewhat hampered by India's reluctance to enter into a more formal alliance and its preference for ad-hoc work-arounds. Mil-to-mil cooperation with Japan, Russia, and France proceeds apace. The Indian Navy conducts more robust out-of-area deployments in Southeast Asia, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.

Implications for U.S.-India naval cooperation

Unlike the scenarios associated with the alternative trajectories described below, the scenario associated with the baseline trajectory posits a situation in which the overarching strategic framework for mil-to-mil cooperation between Washington and New Delhi does not change. Mil-to-mil ties proceed along a steady upward trend, with only marginal changes to pace and direction. They are fostered by a convergence in geostrategic interests, particularly Washington and New Delhi's desire to counterbalance a more assertive China. Yet this trajectory is also hampered by many of the factors that constrain mil-to-mil ties today.

Modi plays a critical role on the Indian side in fostering the conditions for positive mil-to-mil ties. It is unclear, however, what his impact and absence after 2024 may have on the relationship in the scenario described above. Without Modi, there would likely be no progress on the foundational agreements and bureaucratic inertia would set in on the Indian side, inhibiting further progress. Potentially, under Modi, the bilateral defense relationship may gradually become institutionalized, to the point that it can weather the ups and downs associated with political transitions on either side. Regardless, if the current trajectory holds for the near future, the Indian Navy is likely to conduct more out-of-area deployments, especially to Southeast Asia.

Three "growth areas" for U.S.-Indian security cooperation emerge in the scenario identified above: anti-submarine warfare (ASW), MDA, and inter-service coordination and interoperability. Growing PLA Navy and Pakistan Navy subsurface capabilities are driving future collaboration on ASW, particularly for bilateral and trilateral exercises, such as MALABAR. This also appears to be a factor driving the Indian Navy's interest in MDA and information sharing, along with the Indian Navy's recent acquisition of P-8 maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft. The creation of the National Command Control Communications and Intelligence (NC3I) Network and naval fusion Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)—whose development was led by the Indian Navy after the Mumbai attacks in order to improve coastal security—

could provide additional opportunities for India and the United States to collaborate on MDA and information sharing.

Alternative trajectory 1: renewed focus on Pakistan and land-based threats

Alternative trajectory 1 presents a scenario in which Pakistan is viewed as a much more dangerous and immediate threat by key decision-makers in New Delhi. As a result, the MoD, the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), and the armed services shift much of their strategic focus from India's eastern and northern borders and the Bay of Bengal to the west (i.e., the Line of Control, India's land and sea borders with Pakistan, and the Arabian Sea). The scenario, as described below, features several of the factors identified earlier that could alter the current trajectory (e.g., the possible occurrence of black swan events; the roles of China and Pakistan and Washington's policies toward Beijing and Islamabad; and changes in MoD priorities and Indian Navy resources).

The scenario

In reaction to a reinvigorated terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan, including a massive attack on a domestic target similar in scale to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, India reinforces its military presence along its western border with Pakistan. Tensions increase along the Line of Control, with periodic cross-border shelling and raids. China continues to be viewed as a long-term problem, mainly due to the PLA Navy's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean, but not as a short- or medium-term threat. New Delhi is disappointed in Washington's hesitation to side openly with India in its dispute with Pakistan. The Indian Army and Air Force continue to receive the lion's share of MoD resources. The Indian Navy's share of the budget tapers off relative to the other services, at approximately 15 percent. The Indian Navy's Western Naval Command is prioritized over the Eastern Naval Command in terms of resources.

Implications for U.S.-India naval cooperation

The strategic implications of the scenario detailed above are far from evident. On one hand, China might be perceived as less of an immediate threat, and, as a consequence, the Indian Navy would shift a portion of its resources from the Eastern to the Western Fleet. On the other hand, Indian policymakers might be less inclined to view China and Pakistan as separate and distinct issues, and, as a consequence, the current allotment of resources between the Eastern and Western Fleets would not

change dramatically from the baseline trajectory. According to this point of view, policymakers in New Delhi would be confident of the Indian military's ability to contain the threat from Pakistan. They would be more concerned about how China might exploit the situation in the Indian Ocean, and would respond by prioritizing the Eastern Fleet, specifically in maritime domain awareness (MDA), maritime interdiction operations (MIO), and ASW operations in the Bay of Bengal.

Although New Delhi would probably closely scrutinize Washington for its stance on Pakistan, Washington's relationship with New Delhi in the five-to-10-year timeframe would likely eclipse its ties to Islamabad. Therefore, the ramifications of Pakistan's negative actions on U.S.-India ties would be limited. Furthermore, the capabilities that the Indian Navy would need to develop in order to counter both the Pakistan Navy in the Arabian Sea and the PLA Navy in the Bay of Bengal would be somewhat fungible, presenting additional opportunities for collaboration with the USN.

ASW in particular is an area ripe for cooperation. The Indian and U.S. navies now operate similar intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms for ASW—notably the P-8 Poseidon aircraft and its export variant—which would provide cross-training and tech-sharing opportunities. Underwater maritime patrol and reconnaissance (MPR) would potentially be another area for collaboration, particularly in a scenario in which India was concerned about the Pakistan Navy's or PLA Navy's ability to threaten its sea lines of communication (SLOCs) with subsurface platforms. India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been doing a lot of work on unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), mainly for ISR, mine mitigation, and sensor deployment.⁴⁵

In the scenario described above, the Indian Navy and Coast Guard would probably focus heavily on policing India's EEZ and territorial waters, particularly on the west coast. Given India's territorial sensitivities, the opportunities for collaboration here may be more limited, but they would still exist. Both services would probably seek to bolster their capacity to monitor, track, interdict, and board suspect vessels. Exercises that focus on visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) and MIO could provide one avenue for security cooperation.

⁴⁵ S. Anandan, "India Takes Giant Leap in Autonomous Sea Vehicle Programme for Security," *Hindu*, Jul. 6, 2012.

Alternative trajectory 2: Monroe Doctrine in the Indian Ocean

Alternative trajectory 2 envisages a scenario in which the principle of non-alignment, coupled with India's desire to exert a dominant influence over its near abroad, becomes the driving factor governing India's approach to security cooperation across multiple domains. It diverges from the baseline trajectory in that it imagines an India that is at once confident of its capabilities and "manifest destiny," with a more robust navy, which it utilizes primarily for power projection, but at the same time is suspicious of, and reticent to engage with extraregional powers. It features most of the factors listed earlier, including the roles of China and Pakistan and Washington's policies toward them, ideology, black swans, personalities, security cooperation priorities, and Indian Navy capacity.

The scenario

Following elections, the BJP-led NDA government is displaced by a center-left coalition, led by the Congress Party. The Congress Party does not achieve an outright majority in the elections, and is forced to govern with a loose coalition that includes various regional and leftist parties. Although largely preoccupied with domestic issues, the Indian government asserts its role as the dominant power in the Indian Ocean while at the same time seeking to preserve its non-aligned status and minimizing the influence of extraregional powers in its near abroad. Tensions with Pakistan remain moderate but manageable. Tensions with China abate somewhat as trade ties between the two states expand, and land border disputes are brought to mutually acceptable resolution. Ongoing trade disputes with the United States, a high-profile negative incident during a USN port visit, and a diplomatic spat (similar to the 2013 Devyani Khobragade episode) dampen India's enthusiasm for mil-to-mil engagement with the United States. India's armed forces exhibit a strong preference for bilateral mil-to-mil engagements with regional (i.e., Indian Ocean and Western Pacific littoral) countries. The MoD and Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) continue to place a strong emphasis on indigenous production (i.e., "Make in India"). The Indian Navy's share of the defense budget increases to around 25 percent.

Implications for U.S.-India naval cooperation

While the diplomatic and military incidents listed above could have a deleterious effect on mil-to-mil engagement, their effect would probably be temporary because they would not alter India's overarching strategic calculus. More serious would be the change in leadership in New Delhi, coupled with India's improving relationship with China. Several roundtable discussants noted the vital role played by Modi in fostering

closer mil-to-mil ties with the United States. Absent Modi, the mil-to-mil relationship between Washington and New Delhi is likely to lose momentum for two reasons: the left-leaning coalition government that is at least partly beholden to parties not favorably disposed to the United States, and the diminishing threat perceptions of Chinese deployments in the Indian Ocean.

In essence, the scenario would represent a return to Cold War thinking on New Delhi's part.⁴⁶ Although the U.S. and Indian militaries have made great progress in their bilateral ties, particularly in terms of information sharing, in the scenario described above, the "not-in-our-neighborhood" attitude could reassert itself in Indian policy-making circles.⁴⁷

In such a scenario, the opportunities for naval engagement are likely to be more limited. Activities that are perceived as directed at China—for instance, the MALABAR series of now-trilateral exercises—could be curtailed. A greater emphasis on multi-polarity is likely to return to India's diplomatic outreach, with increased stress on engagement with Indian Ocean littoral countries, and related events, such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). Despite these limitations, there are a few areas where maritime engagement would likely continue unimpeded—although certainly less ambitious than what the USN has become accustomed to under the Modi administration. One of these areas is UN peacekeeping operations, at least when such operations take place outside of India's immediate neighborhood. India's armed forces have taken great pride in their significant role in these operations, including hosting the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK), a peacekeeping training institution, in New Delhi. Other areas that would likely be somewhat immune to geopolitical changes include MDA—provided that cooperation in this area could be decoupled from the intelligence domain—and counterpiracy.

The geography associated with any engagement activities would be doubly important in this scenario. With China viewed as a declining threat, the locus of engagement would likely shift to meet the Indian Navy's strategic priorities, from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. Maritime security operations and coastal defense would continue to be priorities for the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, but the USN would have to think creatively about how to engage in these areas. Especially in the scenario described above, New Delhi is likely to be sensitive to any form of engagement that could be perceived as detrimental to India's sovereignty or role as the dominant power in South Asia. In some cases, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) would probably be

⁴⁶ According to one roundtable participant, India's position under Modi has shifted away from a belief that "the United States shouldn't be in our neighborhood" to the view that, if the United States is in the Indian Ocean, "at least let us know what you're doing."

⁴⁷ Samaranayake et al., 2013.

the right vehicle for engagement, but the United States and India would need to work out the modalities of interaction between the MoD, under which the Indian Coast Guard falls, and the Department of Homeland Security, under which the UCSG falls.

Alternative trajectory 3: tensions with China increase

Alternative trajectory 3 represents a confluence of factors that favor considerably deeper U.S.-Indian naval cooperation. These factors include the roles of China and Pakistan and Washington's policies toward them; the Indian MoD's security cooperation priorities; and the Indian Navy's resources and funding. In this scenario, tensions between India and China become more acute, particularly in the maritime realm. As a result, Indian-U.S. naval engagement is bolstered, and the Indian Navy benefits from a larger share of India's defense budget.

The scenario

Tensions between India and China increase following three events: China's detention of Indian nationals working on an oil exploration platform in a disputed area of Vietnam's EEZ; confirmation of evidence that China provided arms to separatist groups operating in India's Assam state; and the PLA Navy's pursuit of a more sustained presence in the Indian Ocean, with a greater frequency of surface and subsurface patrols and the establishment of naval logistics nodes and supporting agreements with Djibouti and Sri Lanka. Tensions along the Line of Control and India's land border with China remain limited. However, China supplies Pakistan with more advanced weaponry, including aircraft (maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft, strike), anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs), land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs), and advanced guidance systems for short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs). U.S.-India mil-to-mil ties deepen and become more systematic.

Implications for U.S.-India naval cooperation

A scenario in which China becomes more assertive in the Indian Ocean offers various opportunities for security cooperation with the Indian Navy, albeit within the ideological and organizational confines listed above. Maritime ISR is an obvious area for enhanced cooperation, although this would depend on the degree to which progress could be made on the CISMOA, which has been renamed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). Given Indian concerns about Chinese subsurface deployments in the Indian Ocean, and the PLA Navy's and Pakistan Navy's procurements of more advanced diesel-electric submarines, the

Indian Navy would probably be willing to work more closely with its USN and U.S.-allied counterparts in the area of ASW. India would probably be playing a more assertive role in the Indian Ocean, to counterbalance growing Chinese influence. It would bolster its amphibious capabilities and provide more opportunities for the USN to engage in areas such as humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR).

In general, India's armed forces would probably be more willing to enter into formal military arrangements with friendly partners,⁴⁸ including the United States. The Indian Navy, for instance, might consider expanding the scope of MALABAR and other exercises with foreign partners. It might also consider conducting "coordinated patrols"⁴⁹ with the USN in the Indian Ocean, although this willingness would probably not extend to the South China Sea, even if tensions were to increase with China.

⁴⁸ For example, India signed a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan in December 2015. Perhaps in the future, India may be willing to sign a LEMOA with Japan.

⁴⁹ Commander Dinesh Yadav, "Indo-U.S. Joint Naval Patrol: Plausible Proposal or Rhetoric," National Maritime Foundation (NMF), Apr. 11, 2016, <http://www.maritimeindia.org/View%20Profile/635959197581070244.pdf>.

Findings

Based on our research and analysis, we derived the following findings as the United States approaches its security cooperation with India in the naval and maritime domain.

U.S.-India naval ties under the Modi administration are thriving

The United States and India clearly share overlapping strategic interests and security concerns. As mentioned earlier, the navy-to-navy relationship has markedly improved over the past two decades, having served as a driving force for advancing overall defense cooperation. Moreover, India's maritime engagement and activities with Southeast and East Asian countries are increasing,⁵⁰ indicating greater space for USN-Indian Navy cooperation in the PACOM AOR.

Prime Minister Modi, in particular, has been an effective advocate for the relationship, despite Washington's initial hesitation to embrace him because of his role in the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat. Under the Modi administration, the benefits for the navy-to-navy relationship are evident. The establishment of the aircraft carrier technology working group is an achievement that would not have been able to materialize a decade ago. Another example, a trilateral MALABAR exercise with Japan in the Bay of Bengal, was not considered possible so early in the Modi administration, given the 2007 MALABAR controversy. Yet, it took place in 2015, only a year after Modi entered office. In fact, Modi has used his authority to circumvent bureaucratic roadblocks that, while they might not have derailed the relationship, certainly could have arrested its forward progress.

Still, Modi has not been able to break up entrenched bureaucratic obstacles as much as he set out to do. If the BJP were to lose the next election, for instance, or if his administration were to shift much more of its focus to dealing with domestic

⁵⁰ See an accompanying CNA project paper about India's maritime diplomacy and the Indian Navy's missions and capabilities. Limaye, *Weighted West*.

political issues, forward momentum in the mil-to-mil relationship could stall, with likely implications for USN-Indian Navy engagement.

Key factors will affect the evolution of the U.S.-India naval relationship, but these are mostly beyond the control of the navies

As discussed earlier, there are many factors which have affected bilateral naval relations. The reality is that USN and Indian Navy engagement plans are limited by decisions at the White House-PMO, State Department-MEA, and DOD-MoD levels. In addition, India will continue to face capacity challenges, extending to the Indian Navy. Moreover, India interprets the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea differently than the United States regarding military activities in EEZs. Since New Delhi's stance is arguably closer to Beijing's view on this important issue, this is a point of potential disagreement that could flare up unexpectedly. New Delhi policymakers do not support the Indian Navy participating in USN FONOPs that appear to be directed against China.

For its part, DOD can only go so far in defense ties with India, considering the U.S. legal requirements it faces given India's refusal to sign the CISMOA (now COMCASA) and BECA. As a result, USN engagement with the Indian Navy cannot advance as much as possible. Ultimately, this relationship is rooted in national interests first, and civilians in New Delhi and Washington control the pace of navy-to-navy ties. The key for the two navies is being ready to move when the political climate is ripe.

The navies will continue to share overlapping interests

While the USN and the Indian Navy can see their bilateral engagements affected by wider diplomatic and bureaucratic forces, they share ongoing areas of interest—at both the high-end and lower-end of naval missions. In the current climate of rapid forward movement, the Indian Navy is eager to seek cooperation in aircraft carrier technology and expanding the complexity of the MALABAR exercise. The navies can also pursue ASW and submarine rescue cooperation, such as through a repeat of the INDIAEX submarine rescue exercise from 2012 and the ASW cooperation announced in the April 2016 joint statement after Secretary of Defense Carter's visit to India. There is also precedent for the USN to pursue special forces exercises with the Indian Navy's Marine Commandos (MARCOS).

During periods when India's trajectory does not favor close ties with the United States, the USN can pursue progress with the Indian Navy on missions such as HA/DR and coastal security management. Regarding the latter, India's 2015 maritime strategy reminds observers that Pakistan continues to rank high in terms of India's threat perceptions. Whereas the document asserts India's interests in the wider Indo-Pacific, implying more of a Pacific focus, much of the strategy discusses India's attempts to bolster coastal security and promote interagency coordination on the subject. This is understandable since the 2008 Mumbai attacks involving terrorists from Pakistan came from the sea. To address this asymmetric threat, coastal security has become a responsibility of the Indian Navy, which poured significant effort into increasing MDA of the coast, including Bay of Bengal. The National Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (NC3I) network and its fusion center, the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC), were stood up to develop a robust system of detecting challenges to India's security. Given the Indian Navy's current responsibility for coastal security, this circumstance represents a unique opportunity for the two navies. The USN can work with the Indian Navy on an issue normally confined to coast guards, before responsibility reverts back to the Indian Coast Guard.

Regardless of potential future trajectories and difficulties in larger bilateral and defense relations, Indian naval experts cite increasing "interoperability" with the USN.⁵¹ This is a term that Indian officials disparaged less than a decade ago,⁵² so the shift is striking.

India's "West"—both continental and maritime—will remain critical to its national interests

The Indian Navy's self-identified determinants for its roles and missions will continue to be heavily shaped by developments to India's west. Based on our earlier trajectories analysis,⁵³ India is increasingly interested in the region to its west, including the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Gulf, and the East Africa littoral. While Pakistan has undoubtedly influenced New Delhi's threat perceptions and force

⁵¹ CNA discussions, New Delhi and Washington, D.C., 2016.

⁵² S. Amer Latif, *U.S.-India Defense Trade: Opportunities for Deepening the Partnership*, CSIS, Jun. 2012, 21.

⁵³ See also an accompanying CNA project paper about India's maritime diplomacy and the Indian Navy's missions and capabilities. Limaye, *Weighted West*.

posture since 1947, India has growing equities in the Gulf and Africa. There are many economic and strategic drivers that are reinforcing India's emphasis on its west. They include patterns in India's trade, foreign direct investment, and presence of nationals overseas; its significant reliance on the Middle East for its crude oil imports; and its export of refined petroleum products.

These interests have manifestations in the naval realm. For example, the Indian Navy has increasingly conducted non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) in this region (e.g., Yemen, Libya, and Lebanon). The presence of a growing Indian national population working in the Middle East and Africa and their remittances home make a valuable contribution to the Indian economy. Yet, these citizens also represent a vulnerability for which the Indian military must prepare to ensure their safe evacuation when conflict breaks out. Moreover, the Indian Navy is increasingly operating in the western Indian Ocean on, for example, counterpiracy and conducting surveillance operations in the EEZs of Mauritius and Seychelles.

A comparative analysis of the Indian Navy's 2015 and 2007 maritime strategies reveals a greater priority given to the northwest Indian Ocean (specifically including the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea) and an extension to the southwest Indian Ocean, including island nations therein and the littoral regions of Africa's east coast). It is significant that the Indian Navy places a higher priority on the security of maritime chokepoints to its west than it places on those to the east. India's maritime interests are heavily weighted in the western Indian Ocean due to its vital trade routes and investments, oil SLOCs, and preponderance of overseas workers. Indian naval officers increasingly declare the priority of the region to India's west for Indian interests.⁵⁴

As a result, the PACOM AOR does not afford opportunities for the U.S. Navy to work directly with the Indian Navy in the western Indian Ocean. This region represents a relatively untapped area for USN-Indian Navy engagement, and Indian naval strategists often express a strong desire to work together here. Given these regional equities, the U.S. CENTCOM and AFRICOM AORs are clear candidates for greater interaction with the Indian Navy.

⁵⁴ A retired Indian Navy vice admiral wrote recently "...it is in the Western Seaboard of India where lies Indian Navy's bigger operational role." Shekhar Sinha, "Mobama 4 and Maritime Security," Hudson Institute, Jun. 15, 2016, <http://www.southasiaathudson.org/blog/2016/6/15/mobama-4-and-maritime-security>.

Recommendations

Based on our conclusions, we propose recommendations for Washington policymakers to pursue in order to advance naval and maritime cooperation with India.

Continue to build on progress in bilateral naval ties

Defense ties, extending to the navy-to-navy realm, have expanded for roughly two decades. They have benefited in particular from the direction of the Modi administration. For example, progress on DTTI by DOD's India Rapid Reaction Cell has been facilitated by New Delhi. Another example is the Modi administration's decision to sign the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which Washington had sought for years. In the naval realm, the expansion of the MALABAR exercise in terms of location and participants (i.e., a trilateral in the Bay of Bengal and Japan's addition as a permanent member) has been another tangible product of the Modi administration.

Reinforce successes in current and previous navy-to-navy engagements

Instead of formally adding new exercises, the U.S. and Indian navies can resurrect dormant exercises such as HABU NAG, INDIAEX, SALVEX, and SPITTING COBRA and make them more involved and regular. Alternatively, the thrust of each of these exercises (i.e., amphibious training, submarine rescue, salvage, and explosive ordnance disposal, respectively) could be incorporated into future iterations of MALABAR.

ASW and higher-end MDA cooperation are areas of clear growth. The USN could see how it can support the Indian Navy's MDA fusion center, IMAC. The need for such MDA sharing became apparent during India's search for a missing Indian Air Force plane over the Bay of Bengal and Parrikar's request for U.S. satellite data to support

the Indian Navy's search operation. Finally, the USN could encourage greater Indian Navy ship presence in the RIMPAC exercise as well as an ad-hoc, bilateral interaction before or after India's participation in multinational naval engagements in the region, such as the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting (ADMM) Plus exercise series.

Focus on benign naval & maritime activity during difficult diplomatic periods

When diplomatic relations inevitably flare up, the two navies can still pursue meaningful cooperation to advance their relationship. Even lower-end MDA cooperation would be a desirable area. As mentioned previously, the Indian Navy's IMAC suggests opportunities for cooperation with the USN on MDA and information-sharing. The signing of the white shipping exchange-of-data agreement in June 2016 has facilitated such cooperation. Furthermore, if India connects its IMAC with Singapore's MDA effort—the Information Fusion Centre (IFC)⁵⁵—this would represent a multinational MDA opportunity for which the USN could augment its existing support and thus benefit the wider Indo-Pacific region.

The USN and Indian Navy can also try to creatively engage each other on maritime security operations and coastal defense cooperation. This is important to pursue while the Indian Navy maintains responsibility for coastal security and before control reverts back to the Indian Coast Guard. U.S. military training teams could provide insightful lessons learned from the U.S. experience in setting up an institutional and regulatory framework for coastal security in a federal system. To involve the USCG, the two countries would need to work out the modalities of MoD-to-DHS interaction. India may also wish to share its experiences regarding coastal security, which could be informative to the USCG as it rebalances its efforts to the Western Hemisphere. Finally, search and rescue is another fruitful area for cooperation as the loss of the Malaysian Airlines, AirAsia, and the Indian military's own aircraft demonstrates. Counterpiracy is another benign area for cooperation, such as through a bilateral exercise.

Maritime peacekeeping operations outside of India's immediate neighborhood are another option for naval engagement. The USN could also focus on VBSS and MIO in security cooperation with the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, as they seek to bolster their capacity to monitor, track, interdict, and board suspect vessels. Pursuing cooperation on NEO planning could be another fruitful area of engagement given the

⁵⁵ Vijay Sakhuja, "India and Maritime Security: Do More," Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Dec. 1, 2014.

rising need for the Indian Navy to conduct this mission in the Middle East/North Africa region.

Seek a naval role in the HA/DR working group

Regardless of when the larger bilateral relationship is surging forward, or in times of crisis, HA/DR remains a solid area for navy-to-navy interaction. Begun in 2005 after the 2004 tsunami, the HA/DR working group was resurrected a decade later during Parrikar's visit to Hawaii. An HA/DR component could be added to the MALABAR exercise for the Indian Navy to increase its amphibious expertise and jointness (i.e., the Indian Army's maritime element could have a role as well). Another option could be the resumption of the HABU NAG exercise within this working group, given the HA/DR focus of this amphibious training exercise last conducted in 2010. Indian naval strategists also express interest in drafting standard operating procedures for coordinating HA/DR operations with the USN.⁵⁶ These options would help ensure a consistent naval and maritime role in this group. At times when the political climate will invariably be upset due to a black swan event, HA/DR is a more benign way to maintain navy-to-navy interactions while pursuing meaningful cooperation in areas such as amphibious capability.

Create opportunities for U.S.-India naval interactions beyond the PACOM AOR

As mentioned earlier, Indian experts signal an interest in the Indian Navy working with the USN in India's west. They have specifically questioned "...why the U.S. was reluctant to engage with India on conducting naval exercises on India's western sea board."⁵⁷ For the U.S. defense structure, much of the western Indian Ocean region falls within the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). U.S. naval planners working in the PACOM, CENTCOM, and AFRICOM AORs are fully occupied with considerable responsibilities and limited resources in

⁵⁶ CNA discussions, Washington, D.C., 2016.

⁵⁷ Ramesh Balakrishnan, "India Should Rejuvenate Centuries-old Seafaring Tradition," Event Report on "Diplomatic Dimension of India's Maritime Challenges," Observer Research Foundation, Mar. 16, 2016, <http://www.orfonline.org/research/india-should-rejuvenate-centuries-old-seafaring-tradition>.

their respective regions. They naturally wish to advance cooperation with India as a PACOM-AOR country in the context of the East Asia and Pacific region as well as the central and eastern Indian Ocean. Yet, the boundaries between PACOM, CENTCOM, and AFRICOM are meant to facilitate cooperative activities through these demarcations, and should not inhibit reasonable initiatives which would advance U.S. interests. A better U.S.-India relationship and naval cooperation are high on this list.

While the region to India's west is outside the PACOM AOR, it presents intriguing possibilities for expanding the spectrum of USN-Indian Navy cooperation across multiple U.S. COCOMs. Some ideas follow:

- To expand on this coordination, the United States could invite Indian Navy liaison officers to PACOM, CENTCOM, and AFRICOM and their fleets as a way to demonstrate the U.S. interest in working with the Indian Navy across multiple regions.
- The new Maritime Security Dialogue could provide mechanisms for pursuing cooperation outside the PACOM AOR.
- The USN could work with the Indian Navy on NEO planning and coordination, given both countries' equities in this mission.
- The United States could invite India to participate in the AFRICOM-AOR CUTLASS EXPRESS exercise, which includes many East African littoral maritime forces with which the Indian Navy interacts and operates (those of Seychelles, Mauritius, etc.). Related, the two countries could coordinate on capacity-building of smaller navies and coast guards in the Indian Ocean region.⁵⁸
- The United States and India could organize a bilateral counterpiracy exercise in the western Indian Ocean. As a precedent, the PLA Navy has exercised three times on counterpiracy with the USN in this region. China is also an independent deployer on this mission like India.

⁵⁸ Samaranayake et al., 2013.

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